

School Programs Commodity Update

What's New in the Food Distribution Program for Schools

USDA Releases BPR Proposal

The Department has just released its Food Distribution 2000 Business Process Reengineering (BPR) proposal to significantly improve and restructure the USDA's commodity distribution programs.

The next step in this effort is to share this information with our program partners and customers for feedback. We are excited about the proposal and feel that it will eliminate many of the problems that the commodity distribution program has faced in the past.

The proposal calls for some of the initiatives to be pilot tested and evaluated for effects on recipients, our school customers and the producer community. They are presented in three sections. Section 1 describes the problems identified by the various constituencies involved in the program. Section 2 describes the proposed solutions. Section 3 presents a chart illustrating the relationship between the various problems and solutions.

The Department believes that the Food Distribution 2000 effort will benefit

schools with problems without adversely affecting those schools that are happy with the current program. The proposal can be obtained from your State agency and it is available on FDD's website for comment. The address is

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/MENU/fd2000/fd2000.htm>

Feedback on the proposal can be submitted until March 31 by e-mail fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov or fax (703) 305-1410.

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New Instructions for Handling Frozen Sliced Apricots

We have encountered a problem with frozen sliced apricots turning brown when drained from their juices and placed in a container to thaw. To help ensure that the frozen apricots do not turn brown, thaw them in the plastic vacuum-sealed bags. The apricots should be served with some, if not all, of the juice on and around the apricots.

The fact sheet on this product will be changed to advise that the product should be kept in juice at all times before serving it.

“Best Practices” Manual on Food Recovery and Gleaning

The twelve school districts that received 1-year USDA funding for the Food Recovery Cooperative Agreements have completed their projects. The results are compiled in a “Best Practices” manual. The manual addresses how twelve school districts across the country spent the funds received from USDA to promote gleaning and food recovery efforts in school cafeterias. This manual provides models that can be used by schools across the country to recover and donate unserved cafeteria food that is otherwise not

reused. It also addresses ways that students can get actively involved in the efforts.

After approval, this manual will be electronically mailed to the regions for dissemination to States. It will also be posted on the Food Distribution’s website.

We are encouraging schools to look at this manual to obtain ideas on how they can start a food recovery program in their school district.

**Commodity Complaint
Hotline**

1-800-446-6991

Bonus Almonds Expected

A surplus removal purchase of natural and roasted almonds has been announced. An estimated buy of 80 trucks has been offered to states for distribution to schools. A mix of whole roasted and natural shelled almonds in 25 pounds cartons are expected to be delivered. Purchases will be announced soon.

Innovative Bonus Trail Mix Purchase a Success

USDA provided almost 800,000 pounds of trail mix to schools using five bonus products. The Trail Mix is made of equal parts of dried cranberries, dried dates, dried figs, dried prunes, and walnuts in 5-pound packages.

The product is being delivered to schools in 25 States February through April of 2000. This purchase effectively removes these surplus commodities, and we look forward to receiving your feedback.

Pack Dates on Commodities

Do you find the pack date on commodities puzzling? Concerns were recently raised about pack dates and how they are being displayed on our commodities. Confusion arose when commodities were received with a Julian pack date rather than the more common format, which is month/day/year. A Julian date is acceptable. Julian dates are displayed as the day of the year and the year packed. For example, products that will be packed on March 21, 2000 will be 81-0, the 81st day of the year 2000.

USDA commodities are purchased from the same suppliers who provide food to the commercial market. Commodities do

not require any additional or separate information on pack dates. The commercial market is required to place pack dates on secondary containers (the shipping cartons).

A few of our commodities are not shipped with a secondary container; items such as frozen cherries and strawberries are received in pails. Since the primary container is also the shipping container, vendors are required to include some form of pack date on this container. In some cases, the manufacturers will use a Julian date since this is a standard format within these particular industries.

Many of the codes found on cans, bags, or boxes are voluntary and may differ widely between industries and between packers within an industry. For this reason, there is not a generic list of date codes. Manufacturers choose their package codes primarily for purposes of internal control and inventory.

Percentage of Commodities Provided by Food Group

Have you ever wondered what percentage of each food group USDA provides in commodities?

The Food Guide Pyramid shows you the food groups and the number of servings from each group to eat each day. The

Pyramid calls for eating a variety of foods to get the nutrients you need. It emphasizes foods from the five major food groups. Fats are to be used sparingly.

- Grains group--6-11 servings
- Vegetable group--3-5 servings
- Fruit group--2-4 servings
- Milk group--2-3 servings
- Meat group--2-3 servings

The table below reflects the percent of total pounds of commodities by food group provided to schools in SY 1999. The data includes both entitlement and bonus commodities. The total pounds provided was 1,033,643,291.

FOOD GROUP	POUNDS
Fruits/Vegetables	42%
Meat/Poultry	35%
Grains	10%
Dairy	8%
Fats	5%
Total	100%

Interactive Recipe Exchange

We wish to thank those schools which have passed on the word about the Recipe Exchange page on our web site and encouraged its use. We are pleased to have received several recipes recently. Four new recipes will be added to the page shortly, and others are planned for the near future.

You can fax the recipes to us at 703-305-1410 or you can send them to the PST mailbox at: fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov

Be sure to visit the Recipe Exchange web page at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/MENU/ADMINISTRATION/RECIPES/recipes.htm>



As you know, advance planning is essential for the success of any organization. It makes businesses run smoother and operate more efficiently. In an effort to be more customer service oriented, we are including some changes that will take place in SY 2001. The changes are addressed in the next three articles.

SY 2001 Foods Available List for Schools

The Foods Available List for Schools for SY 2001 was disseminated to States in November 1999. This will enable States to let schools know very early what commodities will be available for the upcoming school year.

As in the past several years, nonfat dried and instant nonfat milk will be available as a bonus to schools and other child nutrition programs for processing or for baking. It is available in 25 kilograms bags (approximately 60 pounds).

There will be two new commodities available under State Option Contracts (SOC). The products are Cut up Chicken IQF in 40 pound cartons and Grilled Chicken Patties in 30 pound cartons.

Cheese Available for SY 2001

As you know, USDA offers a large number of different types, varieties and pack sizes of cheeses for schools. The cheese types include cheddar, process American, mozzarella, natural American and blended cheese. These cheese products are available in many forms which include: frozen, unfrozen, reduced fat, shredded, and lite.

We have noticed many of these products in various pack sizes are not being ordered or are ordered irregularly in very small quantities. Therefore, for SY 2001 we will be offering only the pack sizes of cheeses that schools are ordering. This will enable us to purchase cheese in more standard commercial pack sizes which should increase competition and help to reduce the cost of this product.

We have received comments from some schools that they are encountering problems with the lite mozzarella not melting properly. We are contacting the schools for additional information on the melting problem. If you are experiencing problems with this product, please let us know either through our website or the complaint hot line at 1-800-446-6991.

Case Weight Change for Some Purchases SY 2001

We will be changing the case weight for frozen pork 36, frozen beef 36, sausage, and beef patties (including SOC) from 36 pounds to 40 pounds for the upcoming school year. This change is being made because 40 pounds is the industry standard. We believe this could expand our vendor base and reduce costs. This change will be made in PCIMS as soon as all SY 2000 orders are purchased.

Useful Internet Addresses

Here are some Internet addresses that you may find useful.

Commercial Item Descriptions – CIDs are simplified product descriptions that concisely describe key salient product characteristics of an available, acceptable commercial product.

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/fqa/cids.htm>

Food and Nutrition Information

Center - FNIC helps people who need information or educational materials in the area of food and human nutrition.

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/>

Food Distribution – The Food Distribution Division administers food distribution programs that provide food and nutrition assistance to eligible individuals, families, and institutions.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/>

Food Safety and Inspection Service – **FSIS** is responsible for ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/>

Team Nutrition – TN provides schools with nutrition education materials. State agency partners provide training and technical assistance to support these programs in local schools.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/>

Did you know....

The Center for Science in the Public Interest recently listed the top 10 most nutritious foods that you are likely to find on supermarket shelves:

Beans	Spinach and Kale
Oranges	Strawberries
Broccoli	Cantaloupe
Sweet potatoes	Oatmeal
Whole-grain bread	
Fat-free or 1 percent milk	



Browse New Items on FDP's Web site

Several new items have been added to FDP's web site as follows:

- Updated our Food Distribution 2000 web page to include the Department's BPR Proposal to improve the commodity distribution programs.
- Revised the [Food Distribution Home Page](#) to provide links to most frequently visited web pages.
- Updated our News and Information Web page to include the December 1999 Edition of the *School Programs Commodity Update*.

Comments

If you have any questions or comments on our products or services, and if you want to send us comments on the BPR proposal, we have an e-mail address specifically for this purpose: fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov or you can write to Food Distribution Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 520, Alexandria, VA 22302.



Acronym List

BPR	Business Process Reengineering
FDD	Food Distribution Division
IQF	Individual Quick Frozen
NFDM	Nonfat Dry Milk
PCIMS	Processed Commodities Inventory Management System
SOC	State Option Contract
SY	School Year
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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conjunction with the Schools and
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